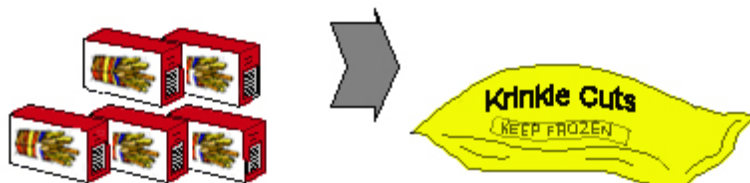




FACT SHEET

Thinking OUTSIDE the Box



Packaging is a good thing. It protects a product and keeps it clean. It also can prevent tampering, provide information, and preserve freshness.

Some packaging, however, is strictly for shelf-appeal. It enhances a product's attractiveness or prominence on the store shelf. Since packaging materials account for a large volume of the trash we generate, it is important to ask yourself, "Is this packaging really necessary?" Here are some ways to think outside the box:

- **Keep it simple.** When choosing between two similar products, pick the one with the least unnecessary packaging.
- **Get into bins.** Wrenches, screwdrivers, nails, and other hardware are often available loose in bins. At the grocery, consider whether it is necessary to purchase items such as tomatoes, garlic, and mushrooms in prepackaged containers when they can be bought unpackaged.
- **Shop your own shelves.** When appropriate, use products you already have on hand to do household chores.* Using these products can save on the packaging associated with additional products.
- **Concentrate.** Consider whether concentrated products are appropriate for your needs. They often require less packaging and less energy to transport to the store, saving money as well as natural resources.
- **Do it yourself.** Buy a big bag of chips and, with reusable containers, divide into lunch-size portions. Freeze leftovers for use as a meal-for-one.
- **Bulk up.** Consider large or economy-sized items for household products that are used frequently, such as laundry soap, shampoo, baking soda, pet foods, and cat litter. These sizes usually have less packaging per unit of product. For food items, choose the largest size that can be used before spoiling.
- **Speak out.** Recognize and support store managers when they stock products with no packaging or reduced packaging. Let clerks know when it's not necessary to double wrap a purchase.

* See [Safe Substitutes for Hazardous Household Products](#) on the Fact Sheet page at waste.ky.gov

Source: Consumer Handbook for Reducing Solid Waste, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. For more source reduction tips, go to <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/reduce/catbook/problem.htm> Artwork: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

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